



Transnational Citizenship and Deterritorialized Identity: The Meanings of Nikkei Diasporas' Shuttling between the Philippines and Japan

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Abstract

The descendants of pre-Pacific War Japanese immigrants to the Philippines, who are called “Philippine Nikkeijin”, have attracted attention from mass media and the public of Japan for the last decade primarily because of their unique and various means to regain their “lost” Japanese nationality. One of their strategies was to change their self-identity label from “Philippine Nikkeijin” to “*Firipin Zanryū Nihonjin*” (Japanese left behind in the Philippines). With Japan’s 1990 revision of its migration law granting residential privileges to alien Nikkeijin or Nikkei, Philippine Nikkeijin have enhanced their transnational mobility from the Philippines to Japan, and have “upgraded” their Nikkei legal status (e.g. from Sansei or the third generation Japanese to Nisei, the second generation Japanese). This paper examines such fluid identities and citizenships possessed by the Philippine Nikkeijin, and discusses the meanings of their movements in the age of human globalization.

Introduction

Globalization has increased the mobility of people across national borders. This transnational migration phenomenon challenges both the basis of one's belonging to a nation-state and the notion of citizenship in developed and developing countries alike. Naturalization and the acquisition of multiple citizenship (including nationality) have become more common among foreign communities particularly in developed countries. Multiple citizenship sometimes causes disparity or dissociation between their national/ethnic identity and the "adopted" citizenship. Such transnational citizenship and "deterritorialized" identity are the central theme of this paper on "returned" Philippine Nikkeijin residing in Japan. Data for this paper were taken from my interviews with key informants—over 100 Philippine Nikkeijin (mainly Nisei and Sansei)—conducted in the Philippines and Japan intermittently between August 2001 and May 2008, and a careful reading of primary and secondary materials.

The Nikkeijin or Nikkei are seen around not only in the Americas but also in Asia and Oceania.¹ At the end of World War II, thousands of Japanese were left behind in several Asian countries. In Manchuria, over 2,300 Japanese war orphans and around 4,500 Japanese women had remained for 40 years or more after the war (Iida, 1996, p.262). Moreover, hundreds of Japanese soldiers who had deserted the Japanese Imperial Army remained in Indonesia (over 1,000) and in Vietnam (over 700) at the end of the war, and many of them joined their host nation's independence armed struggles against Western colonizers (Yui and Furuta, 1998, p. 173). In Australia, a small number of Japanese who were locally born or had locally-born wives were allowed to remain even after the war (Nagata, 1996, p. 193-217). Due to post-war hostile circumstances, most of them were ostracized in host countries and thus had to conceal their Japanese name and ethnicity.

In recent years, such a negative identity has been transformed into a more positive one in Nikkeijin (Nikkei) communities in the countries of their birth. Japan has not been hesitant to receive the once war-stigmatized

Nikkei aliens mostly as unskilled laborers in their “ethnic homeland” in the last two decades. Japan has been gradually heading towards a multicultural society in parallel with a rapid increase of Nikkei “returnees” and other “newcomer”² foreign residents in Japan. The multiplicity of ethnic groups and the absence of contiguity of such groups make any notion of territorially based self-determination patently impossible. However, insofar as such groups can make claims on states on the basis of international human rights law and, hence, become recognized actors in the international arena, territoriality becomes less critical to self-determination (Jacobson, 1997, p. 126). In provocative words used by Morley and Robins (1995, p. 87), “places” are no longer the clear supports of one’s identity. Based on the above arguments made by Western scholars, I define the term “deterritorialized identity” as one’s sense of belonging to the nation that is outside his/her residential territory or the absence of belonging to any national territory.

Citizenship was generally perceived, in the past, as membership in a nation-state. An increasing number of transnational migrants have been challenging such concept of nation-state. As the citizenship scholar Reiner Bauböck (1995) argues, it can no longer be defined by the model of national communities. In this paper, I simply define the term “transnational citizenship”, which was used by Bauböck for international migrants, as citizenship transcending the national border by various means such as naturalization and acquisition of multiple citizenship in their host and/or original country. If citizenship is inconsistent with national identity, the nation might be estranged from the state. This attests to the decline of the state as an operator of collective national identities. In this case, Japan’s citizenship principle based on *jus sanguinis* (one acquires the citizenship/nationality of one’s parents) requires new approaches.

War-Stigmatized Japanese Descendants Called “*Hapon*”

The Philippine Nikkeijin are descendants of the Japanese who emigrated to the Philippines before and during the Asia-Pacific War, and

who have remained in the country of their birth even after the end of the war. They are categorized mainly into three generations called “Nisei” (the second generation), “Sansei” (the third generation) and “Yonsei” (the fourth generation). According to the 2005 survey conducted by the Philippine Nikkeijin nationwide organization called the Federation of Nikkei-jin Kai Philippines (hereafter, abbreviated as FNJKP), the numbers of Nisei, Sansei and Yonsei are 2,972, 10,288 and 31,904 respectively.³

The Nisei who were left in the Philippines, and whom I call “Philippine Nisei”, have often been called “collaborators” (those who sided with the Japanese forces) or “*Hapon*” (Japanese) by Filipinos in their younger days. In certain contexts, the term “*Hapon*” used to carry negative connotations of a cruel race in postwar Philippine society due to the Japanese forces’ inhumane activities during the Japanese occupation in the Philippines (1942-45). Philippine Nisei had to overcome the stigma of being “collaborators” or “children of the enemy” and consequently suffered from lower social status and serious poverty. It is not an unusual story among the Philippine Nikkeijin community that they fought against Filipino pupils’ bullying, and some of them had to drop out of school due to harassment by local Filipinos who strongly hated the Japanese for committing atrocities in their country during the war.⁴ As a consequence, their educational attainment was relatively low, and most of them had no other way but to engage in manual labor such as farming and homemaking.⁵

Their war-stigma had gradually disappeared especially after Japan established a reputation as an economic power in the world and became one of the biggest economic donors for the Philippines in the 1970s. Some Philippine Nisei commenced their campaign for redress against the Japanese government to demand pension-payment for Nikkeijin veterans who sided with Imperial Japan and their families, as well as official recognition as Nikkeijin so that they and their children (Philippine Sansei) would be able to “return” to Japan to work on the basis of a long-term resident visa. The Philippine Nisei re-labelled themselves as “*Firipin Zanryū Nihonjin*” (Japanese left behind in the Philippines).⁶ This wording evokes their tragic family breakup during and after the

war, and has appealed to the Japanese government which is responsible for compensating war victims.

The “Return” Phenomenon of the Nikkeijin

Although Japan has often been perceived as a homogenous monoethnic nation, the number of its alien residents has steadily increased, exceeding 2 million in 2005, and reaching 2.15 million in 2007 (1.7 percent of the entire population of Japan) (Hōmushō Nyūkoku Kanrikyoku, 2008). This phenomenon coincided with the serious shortage of unskilled labor and the population decline in Japan. It is estimated that around 20 percent of them are alien Nikkeijin. The number of Nikkeijin residents in Japan is currently well over 400,000. Most of them are South American Nikkeijin, especially from Brazil which has the biggest Nikkeijin population (around 1.4 million) in the world (Kaigai Nikkeijin Kyōkai). Nikkeijin “returnees” currently constitute one of the biggest “newcomer” groups in Japan.

The phenomenon of Nikkeijin’s “return” to their “ethnic homeland” has escalated since the Japanese government granted worldwide alien Nisei, Sansei and their spouses and children the privilege of long-term residential status called “resident visa” by enforcing its revised Immigration Control Law in 1990. A significant number of them have already acquired a permanent visa thanks to easier legal procedures based on their blood ties with Japan. Nonetheless, most of South American Nikkeijin “returnees” still consider themselves “strangers” in Japanese society due to their insufficient ability to speak Japanese and their lower social status in the country of their ancestors.⁷

These Nikkeijin are descendants of pre-war and postwar Japanese immigrants to South America. Most of them have been able to stay in their host countries even after the end of the war because of their local citizenship and the continuing shortage of labor in the receiving countries. Overseas Japanese communities in Asia, on the other hand, were almost annihilated just after the end of World War II because a large number of

Japanese migrants became victims in hard-fought battles between Imperial Japan and the Allied Forces. The surviving overseas Japanese were ordered by the Allied Forces to repatriate to Japan. Thus, Nikkeijin communities in this region had to be rebuilt from nothing. The Philippine Nikkeijin are part of such war-stigmatized Nikkeijin.

With the widening economic gap between the Philippines and Japan, a number of Philippine Nikkeijin have a strong desire to break away from impoverishment and to emigrate to Japan. However, it has not been easy for them. All Nikkeijin who wish to acquire a resident visa or any other visa have to submit the Japanese government various documents that would prove their blood relationship with their Japanese forebears. These documents include the *koseki-tōhon* (copy of family register) of their Japanese parents or grandparents. Every Japanese national has his/her *koseki* (family register) kept at a municipal office in Japan, and *koseki-tōhon* is its certified true copy.⁸ However, most Philippine Nikkeijin do not possess their Japanese ancestors' *koseki-tōhon*, which is the most crucial official document proving consanguinity with the Japanese.

There are several reasons for this. First, many of intermarried Issei deliberately or inadvertently failed to register the birth of their children in their *koseki*. Second, many Nisei did not know which municipality office of Japan kept their parents' *koseki* because their parents had not left them any record of the legal address of the family registry in Japan before the parents died in the Philippines or were repatriated to Japan. Third, many Nisei lost or had to abandon their *koseki-tōhon* and/or other documents that prove their Japanese ethnic ancestry amid the war chaos and post-war hostile circumstances in order to conceal their identity as children of Japanese.⁹

Searching for Japanese Forefathers' *Koseki* (Family Register)

Thus, one of the crucial missions of Philippine Nikkeijin associations which were organized in Baguio, Davao and other major Philippine cities since the 1970s was to be a channel for searching for their members' *koseki* in Japan. Their associations were assisted by Japanese ex-Davao

residents, attorneys, personnel brokers, among others. The Nikkeijin have been able to identify their *koseki* step by step. By the end of 2002, the Federation of Nikkei-jin Kai Philippines (FNJKP) identified 19,196 Philippine Nikkeijin (1,910 Nisei, 6,206 Sansei, 11,080 Yonsei) in the whole country. It classified their Nisei members into three categories A, B and C. Category A refers to Nisei whose names are registered in their Japanese parents' *koseki* that are already located. Category B refers to Nisei who have already located their parents' *koseki* but whose names are not registered. Category C refers to Nisei who are not able to locate their Japanese parents' *koseki*, and thus have no *koseki-tōhon*. Category C Nisei and their descendants are not qualified to work in Japan with resident visas because the Japanese government does not recognize them as "authentic Nikkeijin".

The Japanese government's attitude towards the Philippine Nisei was quite different from that towards the Chinese Nisei called *Chūgoku Zanryū Nihonjin-koji* [Japanese orphans left behind in China]. Although both groups of ethnic Japanese had very difficult lives without Japanese relatives after the end of the war under hostile circumstances in their respective host countries, the Japanese government did not extend their assistance to Philippine Nisei. On the other hand, since the 1970s, the Japanese government assisted the Chinese Nisei in identifying their Japanese relatives and realizing their permanent return to Japan. These Chinese Nisei were fostered by their Chinese adoptive parents after they lost their Japanese parents amid the confusion resulting from the Soviet invasion of Manchuria, which was once under the control of Imperial Japan, in August 1945.¹⁰

One of the reasons why the government had different policies toward the two groups is explained by Attorney Hiroyuki Kawai assisting the Chinese Nisei and Philippine Nikkeijin in locating their relatives and *koseki* in Japan: "The Philippine Nikkeijin are half (-blooded) whereas *Chūgoku Zanryū Koji* have both Japanese parents. The Japanese tend to have compassion for pure-blooded Japanese, but not for people of Japanese-foreign mixed parentage because the Japanese are believers in blood purity" (*PNLSC News*, No.10, p. 4, November 2005).

Japanese mass media and politicians voiced strong criticism against their government which they accused of not being concerned with Philippine Nikkeijin problems, especially after 1995, the 50th anniversary of the end of the Asia-Pacific War. They accused their government of causing the breakup of families after the occupying Japanese army was defeated by the US-Philippine forces. In response, the government began to promote Philippine Nikkeijin's "return" to Japan by offering assistance in locating their Japanese ancestors' *koseki*. Since 1995, the government has funded FNJKP's surveys in order to complete its members' family trees and prove their Japanese ancestry, for easier visa issuances to "returning" Nikkeijin. By 1997, Japanese government officials including then Prime Minister Ryūtarō Hashimoto himself began to use the term "*Firipin Zanryū Nihonjin*" (Japanese left behind in the Philippines) for Philippine Nisei. This is the term the Nisei used to describe themselves, too.¹¹

In parallel with its several nationwide surveys, FNJKP succeeded in finding official documents supporting their members' "Nikkei-ness", including their Japanese parents' *koseki-tōhon*. FNJKP survey figures show that 205 Philippine Nisei were "upgraded" from Category B status to Category A status between 1996 and 2002 after it assisted its members to register their names in their parents' *koseki* in accordance with legal procedures in the Philippines and Japan.¹² Once they acquire Category A status, the Nisei are qualified to send not only their children (Sansei) but also their grandchildren (Yonsei) to Japan to work in accordance with the rules set by Japan's Immigration Bureau.

Philippine Nikkei "return" migrants are composed mainly of Sansei, their Filipino spouses and children (Yonsei). According to the survey by Japan's Immigration Bureau in 2004, the number of Filipinos holding a resident visa was 23,756 (*Hōmushō Nyūkoku Kanri-kyoku*, 2005). The bureau considers that the majority of them are Nikkeijin, and their spouses and children.¹³ Currently, the Philippine Nikkeijin constitute the second biggest Asian Nikkei community in Japan, next to Chinese Nikkei called "*Chūgoku Kikokusha*" (returnees from China).

Shifting Nikkeijin Citizenship

After successfully identifying the *koseki* of their Japanese grandfathers (the first generation Japanese immigrants called "Issei") and thus proving their "Nikkei-ness", a number of Sansei "returned" to Japan to earn a living. Their *dekasegi* [emigration to earn money]¹⁴ phenomenon has caused the "vanishing" of Sansei communities in Davao, Baguio and other areas. Those Sansei usually let their parents (Nisei and his/her Filipino spouse) take care of their children (Yonsei) in the city or town of their origin after the former left for Japan.

Philippine Sansei and Yonsei have been exposed to Philippine culture and language from their birth. They did not know Japanese values and ways of thinking very much before their arrival in Japan, unlike the Philippine Nisei, many of whom were educated at the local Japanese elementary school before the end of the war. The number of "return" Sansei who have mastered writings of Japanese is quite limited even after residing in Japan for several years. This is because most of their Japanese employers do not require them to master Japanese perfectly since that is not necessary in factory or other manual workplaces.

The vast majority of Philippine Nisei are children of Japanese-Filipino mixed parentage. Thus, most Philippine Sansei have one quarter of Japanese blood whereas their children (Yonsei) have only one-eighth Japanese blood. Thus, their Filipino or foreign appearance is quite visible to the native Japanese, unlike the Chinese Nikkeijin who look like the native Japanese.¹⁵ In this respect too, Philippine Nikkeijin tend to be regarded as "Filipinos" or "foreigners" rather than "Japanese" in Japan.

Nonetheless, a number of Philippine Sansei and Yonsei "returnees" have already acquired permanent resident status in Japan. Some of them have acquired Japanese nationality. After they changed their Nikkeijin status from Category B to Category A by registering their names in their family's *koseki*, they could be recognized as Japanese national by the Japanese government. The "upgrading" of their residential status is reflected in the survey data on Philippine Nikkeijin residents of Japan conducted by a

Tokyo-based NPO, the Philippine Nikkeijin Legal Support Center (PNLSC). According to its survey conducted in 2005, 80 percent of 130 Nikkeijin respondents (100 Sansei, 25 Yonsei, 1 Nisei, 4 unknown) had a resident visa, 12 percent had a permanent visa, and 3 percent had a Japanese passport (nationality) (Kawai [ed.], 2006, p. 62).

In 2003, the Philippine government enacted a dual citizenship law that allows natural-born Filipino citizens who have lost their Philippine citizenship by naturalization abroad to reacquire it upon taking the oath of allegiance to the Philippines. On the other hand, the Japanese nationality law does not allow Japanese nationals to hold dual citizenship after the age of 22. However, in reality a number of Nikkei retain dual citizenship even after they reached 22 because the Japanese government does not strictly impose renunciation of Japanese nationality on overseas Nikkeijin who have acquired the nationality of the country of their birth. Thus, Philippine Sansei tend not to hesitate to acquire Japanese nationality. Many of them have become *de facto* dual citizens, retaining a Philippine passport even after acquisition of a Japanese passport.

I estimate that over one hundred Philippine Sansei have already obtained Japanese nationality based on my fieldwork surveys in the Philippines and Japan since 2002. The primary reasons why Sansei residents acquired a Japanese nationality are to ensure their legal rights to stay and work in Japan without limitations, and to give their descendants a citizenship choice for a better future life. Their Japanese passport also provides much more convenience for their travel abroad than their Philippine one. Generally speaking, the developed countries including Japan are cautious about illegal migrants from developing countries; thus they subject Filipino nationals and other people from the Third World to complicated procedures before issuing any visas.¹⁶

After acquiring a permanent visa or Japanese nationality, most of Philippine Nikkeijin continue to shuttle between the Philippines and Japan. The primary reason for being a “repeater” is their concern over their children, spouses and/or other family members who remain in the

Philippines.¹⁷ Although most of them wish to bring their children (and spouses) to the place of their residence in Japan,¹⁸ many consider it difficult to do so primarily due to the expensive cost of living and school fees in Japan that are much higher than those in the Philippines.¹⁹ Thus, most of them return to the Philippines once a year, especially during the Christmas holidays, in order to reunite with their family members and relatives. Sansei residents holding a Japanese passport are usually given a *Balikbayan* [returning Filipino] visa at the Philippine port of entry,²⁰ which enables them to stay for one year at the longest without fees. Sansei residents have made ceaseless efforts to send a good amount of remittances to their family members for the education of their children, family livelihood, and purchase of their lot and house. Their shuttling will not stop until they have acquired an adequate amount of wealth.

Identity Conversion—from Negative to Positive

Generally speaking, the average wage of Philippine Nikkeijin workers in Japan is lower than that of Nikkei workers from South America,²¹ yet the former's income is several times higher than that of the majority of Filipinos working in the Philippines. This is manifested by the 2005 PNLSC survey on Philippine Nikkeijin residing in the Philippines and Japan. Its data show that 68 percent of 121 Nikkeijin respondents in the Philippines earned less than 20,000 pesos (equivalent to 52,000 yen as of early 2008) monthly per household, whereas 58 percent of Nikkeijin respondents in Japan earned over 200,000 yen monthly per household (Kawai[ed.], 2006, p. 30,67).

Thus, among the Nikkeijin community, the *dekasegi* is perceived as the quickest way to upgrade their living standards in the country of their birth. It is also in line with the Philippine government's 30-year-long labor export policies, which has encouraged Filipinos to work abroad as the so-called "OFWs" ("Overseas Filipino Workers"). Their number has increased to more than 8.2 million, and the total amount of their annual remittances

in 2006 was over 12.7 billion US dollars (Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, 2006).

With their *dekasegi* remittance, the living conditions of a number of Nisei and Sansei families have remarkably improved in recent years. In some areas with a concentrated population of Philippine Nikkeijin, buying a lot and building a modern house have become a popular practice among their families. Sansei's *dekasegi* is backed up by their parents remaining in the Philippines. It has become a common family practice for elderly Nisei to take care of their infant grandchildren (Yonse) who are left behind in their home town after their children (Sansei) left for Japan.

In reality, the vast majority of Sansei *dekasegi* workers are engaged in manufacture assembling, construction, marine product processing and other unskilled manual occupations which are often called "3 K" (acronym of three Japanese words—*kitsui* [difficult], *kitanai* [dirty] and *kiken* [dangerous]) or "3 D" in English.²² These jobs are generally shunned by the native Japanese, and thus Japanese employers have to seek an alternative—Nikkeijin as cheaper and legal alien laborers. Many employers view Philippine Sansei laborers as "Filipinos", who do not understand well not only the Japanese language but also the nuances of Japanese values such as *giri* (debt of gratitude) and *ninjō* (sense of humaneness).²³

On the other hand, Philippine Sansei *dekasegi* workers often complain about their wages (which are lower than those of native Japanese workers) as well as the Japanese employers' discriminatory and distrustful attitudes towards mostly brown-skinned strangers from a developing country. Because of cultural and communication gaps between both parties, resignations without advance notice, job abandonment and job-hopping have become common practices among Philippine Sansei *dekasegi* workers.²⁴ Philippine Nisei who were taught Japanese values in childhood are apprehensive about young Sansei's "troublesome" behaviors in Japan, and tend to get frustrated by their "undisciplined" attitude and "selfish" mentality, which are sometimes expressed by

Philippine Nisei in the Filipino words "*kanya-kanya*" ("thinking only of his/her interests").²⁵ Hence, the Nisei have sometimes scolded and instructed Sansei *dekasegi* migrants to work more honestly and harder, as the Issei did in the Philippines.²⁶

It is highly probable that their sense of insecurity in Japan has inevitably changed their sense of belonging. The PNLSC's survey on Philippine Nikkeijin residents of Japan (mostly Sansei and Yonsei) in 2005 show that 55.4 percent of respondents have a sense of belonging to the Philippines and 20 percent to Japan. The other respondents answered "unknown" (12.3 percent), or "neither Japanese nor Filipino" (4.6 percent). Data taken by the same center's survey on Philippine Sansei and Yonsei residing in the Philippines in 2005 show that a little more than 50 percent of them have a sense of belonging to the Philippines, and almost 30 percent of them to both the Philippines and Japan (Kawai [ed.], 2006, p. 36, 82-83).²⁷ These survey results show that a substantial number of young Philippine Nikkeijin residents in Japan have retained their self-identity as Filipino, and their earlier dual identity has weakened or become ambiguous after their emigration to Japan.

Nevertheless, in the Philippines, the reputation of the Philippine Nikkeijin among the local populace has changed from negative to positive. In parallel with the activation of Nikkeijin associations' activities and their increasing visibility in local communities, the Japanese-loan word "Nikkeijin" has become popular even to the native populace in Davao and other places. The positive conversion of Nikkeijin status is exemplified in the non-Nikkeijin young Filipina's words expressed to me during my stay in Davao City in 2002; "I want to be a Nikkeijin if possible". Her words reflect many Filipinos' longing for emigration to developed countries like Japan, to earn more money. This trend is nicely described by one of the Nikkeijin that their own "smell" has changed from "*mabaho*" (fetid) to "*mabango*" (fragrant).²⁸

Non-*Koseki* Nisei's Endless Struggle to Prove Their "Nikkei-ness"

Philippine Nikkeijin's escalating interests in "return migration" to Japan is reflected in the growing number of members of local Nikkeijin associations. About 14 Nikkeijin associations and recruitment agencies were confirmed to be active in Davao as of September 2002.²⁹ Philippine Nikkeijin's new houses, new cars or other luxuries purchased with what they call "*lapad*" (a colloquial for "ten-thousand-yen note")³⁰ tend to be the object of poorer Filipino neighbors' envy. This was exemplified in the murder case of a Nisei, which occurred in Davao City in October 2002. One Japanese-national mestiza Nisei having seven children, all of whom were working in Japan, was killed by her Filipino neighbor after she rejected the latter's request to borrow money (*The Daily Manila Shimbun*, 13 October 2002; *ibid.* 20 December 2002). The Nikkeijin's privileged status also spawned a substantial number of "fake Philippine Nikkeijin" who illegally entered Japan in a bid to work there, pretending to be Japanese descendants after they purchased *koseki-tōhon* at a good price from a bona-fide Philippine Nikkeijin.³¹

Philippine Nikkeijin working in Japan and sending large amounts of remittances to the Philippines take pride in contributing to the economic development of Japan and the Philippines as *dekasegi* workers. This is exemplified in the theme of the eighth national convention of FNJKP held in Manila in May 2007: "The Nikkeijin as a Contributor to Philippine & Japan Economies". The FNJKP president, Carlos Teraoka, considers most of the Nikkeijin as temporary residents of Japan, imbued by a desire to come back to the Philippines in the future.³² In the meantime, however, they seem to have no other choice but to shuttle between the two countries primarily due to the absence of alternative high-salary jobs in the Philippines.

Even so, around 40 percent of all Philippine Nikkeijin still belong to Category C, that is, those who have not yet located their or their Japanese ancestors' *koseki* in Japan. Consequently, their heavy task to locate the *koseki* is still carried by the aged Nisei. It is difficult for the Sansei to find

their Japanese grandfathers' *koseki* without any information and assistance by the Nisei, who still to some extent have memories of their Issei fathers. Philippine Nikkeijin associations and their nationwide federation have striven to get the Japanese government to recognize Category C families as "authentic Nikkeijin" and enable them to work in Japan as *dekasegi* workers. If this mission were realized, Category C Nikkeijin may redeem their dignity as Japanese descendants, and reduce the big income gap between them and Category A and B Nikkeijin.

In the attempt to achieve this, the federation requested Attorney Hiroyuki Kawai, a Japanese legal expert on *shūseki* (creating one's new *koseki*) of *Chūgoku Zanryū Nihonjin-koji* who are not able to identify their Japanese parents, to help Category C Philippine Nikkeijin. *Shūseki* is a legal proceeding that registers a person, who possesses Japanese nationality potentially but whose name is not registered in a *koseki* or whose *koseki* is not found, in a newly created *koseki*. This can be done through the family court in Japan. The primary mission of Kawai, his fellow attorneys and other staff is to locate the unknown *koseki* of Category C Nisei's fathers by examining all relevant documents kept at Japanese governmental offices and fact-findings on the spot.

Since August 2004, a total number of 65 non-*koseki* Nisei have made a petition to the Tokyo Family Court to allow their *shūseki*, assisted by the PNLSC led by Attorney Kawai. Seven of Category C Nisei succeeded in obtaining the approval of the court for *shūseki* by March 2008 (*PNLSC News*, No.20, 21 April 2008, p. 1). The Center plans to let hundreds more of non-*koseki* Nisei (Category C) to make a petition to the same court in order to acquire a new *koseki* for them.³³ Those Nisei descendants are longing for "return migration" to their forefathers' affluent land.

Conclusion

As described above, Philippine Nikkeijin residents in Japan composed of Sansei and Yonsei have shuttled between the Philippines and Japan. Their constant shuttling is due to the nature of their work

“*dekasegi*”, connoting temporary and seasonal employment. In fact, the majority of them are still employed as contractual workers in Japan. Even so, the vulnerable economy and difficult employment situation in the Philippines do not allow them to return permanently to the country of their birth. Their unstable employment and daily encounters with native Japanese who tend to regard them as “foreigners” make their full assimilation with Japanese society difficult even after their long-term settlement in Japan. As a consequence, their national/ethnic identity tends to be diasporic and/or deterritorialized.

Their acquisition of a permanent visa and/or a Japanese nationality, what I call transnational citizenship, is their survival strategy to ensure their right to reside in Japan and to work permanently there. Transnational citizenship is primarily for instrumental purposes, and does not mean the loss of Filipino identity, which they acquired in their younger days. It can be also interpreted as a manifestation of their having multiethnic dual identity. If the Japanese government continues to fail to integrate these Nikkei “returnees” into Japanese society, Japan’s entrenched *jus sanguinis* principle based on Japanese bloodline will appear out-of-date in this age of post-nation state and transnational citizenship.

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Notes

- 1 The Japanese term “Nikkeijin” or its derivative English term “Nikkei” has no official definition, but it is usually used for overseas Japanese residing permanently abroad and their descendants regardless of their nationality and proportion of Japanese blood. The Association of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad (based in Tokyo) estimated that the number of Nikkeijin around the world was around 2.6 million as of 2004 (Kaigai Nikkeijin Kyōkai).
- 2 In Japan, the term “newcomer” means an alien resident who emigrated to Japan after World War II, especially after the 1980s. On the other, the term “old-timer” or “old-comer” means a Korean or Chinese resident who emigrated to Japan after Japan annexed Taiwan (in 1895) and the Korean Peninsula (in 1910), and their descendants settled in Japan.

- 3 Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed in its commissioned survey that 1,748 Nisei (830 males, 918 females) were still alive, and 377 Nisei (224 males, 153 females) had already died in the Philippines as of late 1995. Among these 2,125 Nisei, only 12 were full-blooded Japanese Nisei (7 males, 5 females) and the rest were all mixed blood (Firipin Zanryū Nihonjin Tokubetsu Chōsa Inkai 1995:3). In April 1999, Legal Aid for Japanese Descendants in the Philippines, an NGO based in Tokyo, listed 2,475 Nisei (including the deceased). In July 2005, the Federation of Philippine Nikkei-Jin-Kai Philippines listed 2,954 Nisei (including the deceased).
- 4 The details of Nikkei Nisei's difficult lives in postwar Philippine society are described in Amano, 1990, Ohno, 1991, and other Japanese nonfiction books.
- 5 According to a 2005 survey by the Tokyo-based Non-Profit Organization, Philippine Nikkeijin Legal Support Center, 25 percent of 130 Philippine Nikkeijin respondents chosen at random in the Philippines were elementary school graduates. Most of them were jobless (18 percent), housewives (17 percent), farmers (13 percent) and common carriers (9 percent) (Kawai [ed.], 2006, p. 24-25).
- 6 The Japanese term "*zanryū*" literally means "remaining behind" or "being left".
- 7 South American Nikkeijin "returnees" have been already well studied by Japanese, and North and South American scholars (e.g. Mori, 1992; Tsuda, 2003; Lesser [ed.], 2003; Kajita et al., 2005).
- 8 The *koseki* system was introduced in Japan from China around the 6th Century. It exists in East Asian countries, such as Japan and China, but not in the West.
- 9 The details of the reasons why many Philippine Nisei were not registered in their Japanese parents' *koseki* upon the former's birth are written in Ohno, 2006, p. 94-96. The identity-concealing phenomenon also spread in the Nikkei community in wartime Peru, where many Japanese immigrants and their descendants had to burn their documents showing their connection with Japan in order to escape from persecution by anti-Japanese Peruvians (Tan'no, 2002, p. 51).
- 10 Chinese Nikkei or the Japanese left behind in postwar China and their family members have been able to resettle in Japan some years after Japan established diplomatic relations with China in 1972. For the last 30 years, over 6,000 households and over 20,000 family members have "returned" to Japan with financial assistance by the Japanese government (A survey done by Japan's Ministry of Social Welfare and Labor on April 2006). The total number of Chinese Nikkei including those who 'returned' to Japan at their own expense is estimated at over 100,000 (Ikoh and Koh, 2003, p. 3).
- 11 See the details of politicization of Philippine Nikkeijin problems in Ohno, 2005, p. 229-247, 253-265.
- 12 See the details of Philippine Nikkeijin's politics of recognition to "upgrade" their legal status in *ibid.*, p. 255-269.
- 13 The number of Filipino "resident visa" holders in Japan presumably includes the so-called *Shin Firipin Nikkeijin* (New Philippine Nikkei). They are largely children of Japanese-

Filipino intermarriages that have rapidly increased since the 1980s when a substantial number of Filipina entertainers began to enter Japan. In this paper, I define Philippine Nikkeijin as descendants of prewar Japanese immigrants to the Philippines. Thus, they do not include *Shin Firipin Nikkeijin* in my discussion of Philippine Nikkeijin.

- 14 The Japanese term “*dekasegi*” has been commonly used also among the Nikkeijin in Brazil and Peru.
- 15 The majority of Chinese Nikkeijin (Japanese orphans and women left behind in China after the end of World War II) are pure-blooded Japanese since Japanese-Chinese intermarriages were rare in prewar and wartime China.
- 16 These reasons were explained to me by six Philippine Sansei having Japanese nationality, whom I interviewed in Manila, Davao and Aichi Prefecture sometime in 2002, 2005 and 2008.
- 17 According to the PNLSC survey on 130 Philippine Nikkeijin respondents residing in Japan, 66 percent of them left their child/ren in the Philippines, and 51 percent accompanied their spouse to Japan (Kawai [ed.], 2006, p. 64-66).
- 18 According to the above survey, 24 percent of them wish to bring their family members in the near future, and 29 percent wish to do so sometime in the future. 19 percent think it is difficult even though they wish to do so (ibid. p.85-86).
- 19 This reason was explained to me by three Philippine Sansei residents having Japanese nationality in Aichi Prefecture on May 24th and 26th, 2008.
- 20 A US-based fortnightly newspaper for the Filipino community quotes Commissioner Marceliano Libanan of the Bureau of Immigration as follows (excerpt): when one wishes to get a *Balikbayan* visa, he or she must present proof of former Philippine citizenship at the Philippine port of entry. This visa can be given to a Filipino’s foreign spouse as well as to minor, unmarried children provided they are traveling together (“Balikbayan visa-free stay”, *Manila Mail*, 4 November 2007, accessed 8 June 2008 at <http://www.manilamaildc.net/2007/11/04/balikbayan-visa-free-stay/>).
- 21 Kiyoto Tan’no (2002, p. 51, 59) explains that a small number of Japanese recruitment agencies and undertakers who employ Philippine Nikkeijin workers are primarily responsible for the lower wage of Philippine Nikkeijin *dekasegi* workers.
- 22 According to a 2006 survey by the Philippine Nikkeijin Legal Support Center on Philippine Nikkeijin residing in Japan, 76 percent of 130 respondents answered that their workplace was the factory, and only 2 percent said it was the office (Kawai [ed.], 2006, p. 72).
- 23 This statement comes from Akimitsu Miyauchi, president of Filipino-Japanese Descendants Support Association (FJDSA) based in Chiba Prefecture, whose mission is to find jobs for Philippine Nikkeijin workers in Japan. (Interviewed in Bacolod City, the Philippines on 25 April 2003.) It should be noted that the Filipinos also have a certain sense of *giri*. The Tagalog term *utang na loob* (debt of the heart or, literally, the “inside”) is an important Filipino value that obliges the recipient to repay his/her debt of gratitude to his/her

- benefactor. The similarity and difference between *utang na loob* and *giri* and *on* (obligation) is well discussed by Nakagawa (1986, p. 16-37). Also see Hollnsteiner (1973), Iletto (1979) and Cannell (1999), among others, for an understanding of the concept of *utang na loob*.
- 24 In 2000 and 2001, around 600 Philippine Nikkeijin were employed by Japanese companies affiliated with FJDSA. 250 of them, however, ran away from their respective employers within a half year (Interview with Akimitsu Miyauchi, president of FJDSA, in Bacolod City on 25 April 2003).
 - 25 Interview with Marie Dolores Escano, a Baguio-based Nisei, in Baguio City on 11 October 2002. She had many complaints about the indifferent attitudes of Philippine Sansei *dekasegi* workers who have ignored the foundation's request to contribute funds for the upkeep of the foundation. She passed away at the age of 73 in Baguio on 5 April 2007 after she made various efforts to improve the living conditions of Nikkeijin residents in Northern Luzon for the last 35 years (*The Daily Manila Shimbun*, 7 April 2007).
 - 26 Every time Conrado Katō, a Baguio-based Nisei, visited Japan in recent years, he encouraged many Sansei *dekasegi* workers to do their best at work because of their much higher salary than that in the Philippines (Interview with Katō in Baguio City on 16 October 2002).
 - 27 The total number of the survey respondents in Japan is only 130 (Nisei, Sansei and Yonsei), and that in the Philippines is only 104 (Nisei, Sansei and Yonsei). They were selected at random through Japanese employers or the regional Philippine Nikkeijin association (Kawai [ed.], 2006).
 - 28 This wording was used by a Nisei woman Hilda Tadaoan, corporate secretary of the Filipino-Japanese Foundation of Northern Luzon, when I interviewed her in Baguio City on 17 October 2002.
 - 29 Interview with Lilibeth Desabilla-Malabanan, Chief of Technical Management Division of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples Regional Office No. XI in Davao City on 10 September 2002.
 - 30 *Lapad* originally means "width" or "breadth" in Filipino. Because of the width of the ten-thousand-yen note, Philippine Nikkeijin commonly refer to *lapad* for this wider Japanese note in their conversation.
 - 31 One of the fake Philippine Nikkeijin cases was reported in *Yomiuri Shimbun* (morning ed., 9 May 2004). Its article reported that 13 Filipinos pretending to be of Japanese descent had worked illegally in Japan. According to the article, they purchased *koseki-tōhon* and other official documents comprising 13 Sansei and Yonsei identification papers through a Davao-based foundation representative at the price of 300,000 pesos (around 5,600 US dollars). This case was reported as "just the tip of the iceberg" in the same newspaper.
 - 32 Interview with Carlos Teraoka in Manila on 19 May 2007.
 - 33 Interview with Etsuko Takano, Secretary of the Philippine Nikkeijin Legal Support Center, in Tokyo on 8 April 2008.

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